

Understanding Leadership and its Various Dimensions: A Mini-Review

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Abstract

An important function of directing, leadership plays an important function in influencing behaviour and guiding it into achievement of organizational goals. Leaders are born and leadership skills can be learnt. Leaders are a key human resource in any organisation. The article covers all necessary elements of leadership and its importance in every aspect of life.

Keywords: leadership, skill, leadership style

Introduction

Leadership is the ability of an individual, or a clique, to persuade others to embrace a shared goal and organise them to achieve that objective. People's aims and desires, even their identities, are transformed by effective leadership, which substitutes self-centred behaviour with group-oriented behaviour. Leadership is not the exercise of power over others to force them to obey directives and bend to one's will through rewards and punishments. Leaders are idolised by the public. People gossip about their bosses; airport bookstores are brimming with leadership books; current events scrutinise leader's activities; and much of organisational science is about leadership. This comes as no surprise. Leaders have enormous power over their followers—they make decisions for them and shape the course of their lives, as well as the types of people they become. As a result, followers are focused on how effective their leaders are, how they are elected, appointed, and deposed, and whether they lead for good or evil (Burns, 1978).

Definitions

Leadership is primarily the ability to shape and mould the attitudes and behaviours of others, whether in an informal or formal setting, and management relates to the formal role of decision and command. The connection between two or more people in which one strives to persuade the other to achieve some goal or goals. Leadership is the ability to influence the activities of others, individually or as a group, through communication in order to achieve useful, meaningful, and difficult goals. Leadership is the rising of a man's visions to higher goals, the raising of a man's performance to a higher level, and the development of a man's personality beyond its typical limitations.

George R. Terry (1988) defined leadership by stating that, "Leadership is a relationship in which one person influences others to work together willingly on related tasks to attain what the leader desires."

Koontz and O'Donnell (1959) said that "Leadership is the process of influencing people so that they will strive willingly towards the achievement of group goals."

Characteristics of a Good Leader

The essential task of leadership entails the power to effect change. Although a great deal of research has been conducted on what constitutes a good leader, there does not appear to be a universal agreement. Outstanding leaders are essentially a fine combination of personalities, abilities, actions, sources of authority, and situational factor (Benjamin & Conger, 1999). These become the defining variables in one's ability to influence followers and achieve group goals. Thus, a leader should have some defining qualities that make him stand out from the others. Some of these qualities are:

Motivation. Successful leaders typically have strong inner motivational impulses. They are always driven by an inner desire to accomplish something. Not only should he be self-motivated, but he should also be capable of motivating others. He should also take an active role in boosting his followers' inner urges.

Intelligence. This is regarded as the most crucial trait. Leaders typically have a higher level of intelligence than their followers on average. To a large extent, intelligence is a natural feature of a person because it is directly tied to the brain. Intelligence is defined as the ability to think rationally, analyse accurately, and solve problems. They must interpret the challenges in front of them in a clear and exact manner.

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Relations with others. A leader's success is dependent on the collaboration of the people. That is the reason. An effective leader must have a human relations mindset, too. He should continually strive to improve his social understanding of others. He should be well-versed in people and interpersonal connections. It is critical for a leader to understand how people react to various situations.

Communication skills. A leader must be able to communicate effectively in order to be successful. Good communication abilities can be utilised to persuade, inform, and stimulate. An effective leader is typically an extrovert who is self-assured.

Objective. In dealing with his subordinates, a good leader must be fair and objective. He should not be biased, and he should not allow himself to become emotionally involved to the point when making an objective diagnosis and taking the necessary action becomes difficult.

Other skills. Planning, organising, delegating, and analysing, decision-making, control, and obtaining cooperation are all examples of technical skills. A leader can gain the support of his subordinates through his or her technical abilities.

Although there are different definitions of leadership and many success criteria, it is defined by the notion that it is an impact process that is often situational. A leader's success is determined by his or her ability to achieve a goal through the actions of people involved. Implementing a leader's vision and goals needs the commitment of people in the organisation. In order to attain their goals, society and organisations require competent leadership. But mostly because it is critical to our society's growth and overall well-being. We must also keep in mind that leadership must be continually developed, strengthened, and capable of effectively fostering commitment inside an organisation (Tyagi, 2001).

Importance of Leadership

The importance of leadership can be highlighted from the following:

Action. Even before the task begins, leadership must be established. A leader is someone who communicates policies and strategies to subordinates in order for them to begin work, thus initiating action.

Motivation. Employees are motivated by their leaders to take on jobs that they would not otherwise take on and make them give their best in the work they are currently pursuing.

Individual development. Leaders instil in their followers a willingness, passion, and confidence in their ability to achieve their personal and organisational objectives. As a result, they grow and evolve as a whole.

Instil team spirit. No one person can work alone. Leaders instil in their followers a sense of teamwork and the need to synchronise their efforts with the activities and goals of the organisation. A leader serves as the team's captain.

Helps in bringing change. A leader persuades, clarifies, and encourages people to accept any organisational change with minimal resistance and dissatisfaction. He ensures that personnel do not feel threatened by the changes.

The success of an organisation is frequently linked to its leaders. However, it is important to remember that it is the followers who make a leader effective by embracing his leadership. As a result, leaders and followers work together to ensure the success of leadership (Avolio, 1999).

Leadership Styles

Management professionals have undergone a revolution in how they define leadership and how they view it over the last several decades. They've transitioned from a traditional autocratic approach to a more creative, participatory one (Benjamin & Conger, 1999). It was decided somewhere along the way that not everything old was evil and not everything new was good. Rather, several approaches were required for different situations, and each leader needed to know when to use which one. The four main leadership styles devised by years of research and study are:

Autocratic leadership. Often known as authoritarian leadership, is defined by individual authority over all decisions and little involvement from members of the group. Autocratic leaders

rarely accept input from followers and make decisions based on their own views and opinions. Absolute authoritarian control over a group is the hallmark of autocratic leadership. In some situations, such as when decisions must be taken swiftly without consulting a large group of people, autocratic leadership can be useful. To get things done swiftly and efficiently, some initiatives necessitate strong leadership. In high-stress situations, such as during military battles, group members may choose an autocratic leadership style. It helps members of the group to concentrate on specialised duties rather than having to make difficult judgments. This also permits individuals of the group to become extremely adept at executing specific tasks, which can be helpful to the entire group (Herse, 1967). While autocratic leadership can be useful in some situations, it can also be troublesome in others. Autocratic leaders are frequently perceived as bossy, controlling, and dictatorial, which can lead to animosity among group members. People in the group may detest being unable to share ideas because authoritarian leaders make choices without consulting the group. Researchers have also discovered that authoritarian leadership frequently results in a lack of creative problem-solving, which can impair the group's effectiveness.

Bureaucratic leadership style. The manager with a bureaucratic leadership style manages "by the book," meaning everything must be done according to procedure or policy. The manager refers to the next level above him or her if something isn't included in the book. This manager resembles a police officer rather than a leader. He or she is in charge of enforcing the rules. The bureaucratic leadership style focuses on an organization's administrative needs. This management system is used by teams and departments in the corporate and governmental sectors. Although the bureaucratic leadership style appears to be a flawless model, it has some flaws that should be considered before implementing it in any situation. Managers, legislators, and those in positions of leadership will benefit from a greater awareness of these drawbacks since they will have a better idea of the outcomes to expect.

Democratic leadership. Also known as participative leadership, is a type of leadership in which group members are more involved in the decision-making process. This learning approach has been determined to be one of the most effective, leading to increased productivity, better contributions from group members, and increased group morale, according to researchers. Democratic leadership can lead to better ideas and more innovative solutions to challenges by encouraging group members to contribute their perspectives. Members of a group are also more invested in and committed to projects, making them more inclined to care about the outcome. Democratic leadership, according to research on leadership styles, leads to increased productivity among group members. While democratic leadership has been described as the most effective kind of leadership, it does have significant drawbacks. Democratic leadership can lead to communication breakdowns and unfinished initiatives in cases where roles are unclear or time is of the essence. Members of a group may not always have the appropriate knowledge or competence to contribute meaningfully to the decision-making process.

Laissez-faire leadership. Also known as delegative leadership, is a leadership style in which the leader takes a back seat and lets the group make the decisions. According to studies, this is the type of leadership that results in the lowest levels of productivity among group members. When group members are highly talented, motivated, and capable of working independently, laissez-faire leadership can be beneficial. While the phrase 'laissez-faire' connotes a completely hands-off approach, many leaders remain open to group members for collaboration and input. When group members lack the expertise or experience needed to execute duties and make decisions, laissez-faire leadership is not optimal. Some people struggle with setting their own deadlines, managing their own projects, and resolving conflicts. When team members do not receive adequate guidance or input from leaders, projects might get off track and deadlines can be missed (Stogdill & Coons, 1957).

Theories of Leadership

The attributes that are deemed vital for good leadership are viewed differently by different authors. Some people place a strong

focus on personal characteristics, others focus on the actual behaviour and characteristics of the leader, while some focus on the actual behaviour and characteristics of the leader. Thus, there are a few leadership theories which are discussed in this paper (Fiedler, 1967).

The trait approach. The first leadership theory discussed is the trait approach. Between 1930 and 1950, the trait approach was popular because it represented the early ideas about leadership. According to this view, there are specific personal attributes and features that must be present in order to be a good leader. The proponents of this idea believe that those who are in positions of leadership are better mentally equipped to make better decisions and participate in social activities. They are looking for more information, provide extra details and take the lead in interpreting or summarising a scenario. Most attribute theories hold that leadership qualities are inherited or inborn, and that they cannot be learned. Many researchers have weighed in on the attributes that are thought to be necessary for good leadership. Physical, mental, and moral, educational, technical, and experience-related qualities were classified by Henry Fayol. Charles Brid looked at twenty lists of attributes assigned to leaders in a variety of polls and discovered that none of the traits were present on all of the lists. Leaders were classified based on a variety of characteristics ranging from neatness to nobility. Ralph M. Stogdill has offered a review of several research papers. Various attribute theories, he claims, have identified these qualities in a good leader.

Behavioural theory. Due to the flaws in the characteristic theory, the emphasis on leadership has shifted significantly. This shift in emphasis began to focus attention on a variety of particular types of characteristics on the actual behaviour and activities of leaders, rather than personal attributes or avion of the leader's affect traits of leaders. According to this perspective, leadership entails a leader's interpersonal performance and relationship with his or her subordinates, with the leader's behaviour toward the subordinates being the most important factor. The leader's positive behaviour boosts morale, builds confidence, and boosts team spirit, whereas his bad behaviour will get him fired as a leader. To begin with, the behavioural method varies from the traits approach in that the traits approach emphasises a specific trait that a leader must possess, whereas this theory emphasises a specific behaviour by him. Second, trait theory sought to distinguish leaders from non-leaders based on personality qualities, whereas behavioural theory sought to determine how various types of specific behaviour affect subordinate performance and satisfaction.

The situational contingency theory. Because neither the trait nor the behavioural approaches provided sufficient explanations for organisational leadership, the researchers turned to other ideas. Advocates of situational theories believe that a scenario has a significant impact on leadership and that a leadership pattern is the result of a situation at a specific time. The emphasis of situational theories is not on a leader's personal skills or traits, but on the circumstances in which he functions. A good leader is one who adjusts his behaviour to the demands of the situation.

Fiedler's contingency model. He is widely regarded as the originator of the leadership contingency theory. The leadership contingency model was created by Fred Fiedler. According to

Fiedler's view, leaders are predisposed to a specific set of leadership behaviours. Task-oriented or relationship-oriented leaders are the two types of leaders. Leaders who are task-oriented are more likely to be directive, structure situations, set deadlines, and assign tasks. A distinct set of leadership skills. Leaders that value relationships focus on people, are compassionate, and are not overly directive. Despite the similarities between the two categories of leaders and the leaders addressed in behavioural theories, there is a significant difference between contingency theory and behavioural theories. Fiedler's thesis assumes that a leader's inclination to a specific style of leadership is difficult to modify, that it is a fundamental disposition of the leader with nearly personality-like characteristics.

The Hersey-Blanchard situational model. In order to ensure effective leadership, the Hersey-Blanchard situational model supports associating leadership styles with specific contexts. However, as compared to Fiedler's model, it has a distinct perspective on his style of situational variables. Based on empirical investigations, this paradigm has reached maturity. According to Hersey and Blanchard, the leader must fit his leadership style to the needs of subordinates' maturation, which occurs in stages and follows a cycle. This paradigm, also known as the leadership life cycle theory, is founded on the interaction of three factors: I task behavior, II name-relationship behavior, and III maturity level.

Conclusion

To sum up, effective leadership is dependent on the leader's characteristics, the environment, and the type of follower. The managerial issue of actually exercising leadership in an organisational setting puts leadership theory and research to the test. The growing importance of organisational leadership has placed a lot of pressure on managers to perform at a high level in their leadership roles.

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